

Common Ferns of Minnesota Valley



Rattlesnake Fern (*Botrychium virginianum*)

This distinctive fern has a triangular frond and a spore-bearing stalk arising from its center. It is fond of low forests.



Fragile Fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*)

This is the most common fern on forested slopes of the refuge. It is rather delicate, and averages about 6-8 inches in length.



Crested Fern (*Dryopteris cristata*)

An uncommon species, with fronds that have short, broad segments. It likes shaded, north-facing slopes.



Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*)

This is a medium-to-large fern, divided bi-pinnately (twice). It is most commonly found in low, wet areas, and is soft and pleasantly fragrant. Fruit dots are kidney-shaped.



Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*)

A species of low, wet areas, this is a fairly large (1-2 feet) fern, with rather thick, leathery foliage. Note the “pinnate-pinnatifid” fronds (divided once, with the divisions cut only partway to their middles).



Marsh Fern (*Thelypteris palustris*)

This is similar to Lady Fern in appearance and habitat, but it is only pinnate-pinnatifid, rather than bi-pinnate.



Spinulose Shield-fern (*Dryopteris spinulosa*)

This species is very similar to Lady Fern, but is smaller, has round fruit dots, and typically likes shaded slopes.



Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum pedatum*)

One of the most attractive and recognizable species, it likes shaded north-facing slopes. Its shiny black stems are unique.

Less Common Ferns



Common Polypody (*Polypodium virginianum*)

With distinctively pinnatifid fronds (not fully divided into pinnate segments), this species is found primarily on rocky outcrops, as at Louisville Swamp.



Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*)

These waist-high ferns can grow in large colonies in lowland forests. Several populations exist in Louisville Swamp. Like Sensitive Fern, a separate, brown fertile stalk arises within the fronds.

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Minnesota Valley's website address:
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Deaf/hard of hearing individuals may reach
Minnesota Valley NWR through the Federal
Information Relay System at 1 800/877 8339

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